Contributions.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT—OFFICIAL POWERS.

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For the past two years, I have been a member of a committee whose business it was to formulate a plan for the uniform government of the churches of the brotherhood, and yet we were stricily enjoined from producing any instrument that could be called a creed, or possess any of the powers of those iniquitous instruments that have rent the church militant into perhaps a thousand different communions, and reared high walls of *offense* and *defense* against each other. But rather our work was to be that of finding a way that would be expedient, practical, aggressive and progressive, and that would not limit our growth in any and all of the graces of the Lord; in other words we could not and should not erect a fence circumscribing the providence of God, and limiting his powers or blessings, nor must we say how much we must believe, nor how little we could believe and be a member of the Brethren church. After two years study of this subject, as I believe in the fear of the Lord, I come to the conclusion that to produce what the church expected of us, and keep within the limits of what might be properly styled this blanket injunction, we would simply have to produce a copy of the New Testament, without even annotations, and certainly without abridgement. For the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the sum total of the evangelum—good tidings,—and all the promises are verified, and all the commandments amplified, for he first obeyed before he commanded. A safe rule by which to ascertain just what the Lord did actually command as ordinance for us to obey, is by careful study, to determine just what he *did* himself, for if you are a careful student of the Bible you will have observed that before the Lord issued a command, he always illustrated it by an actual example. To this there is but one exception, and that is the command to *repent*, and as the Lord did not have any sin, he could not repent, yet in the temptation on the mount, he met the devil and underwent just such temptations as come to mankind in all generations, and had he in those several temptations, transgressed any law of God, he certainly would have amplified repentance. In all the commandments, he illustrates and ordains by actual example. To wit, baptism, the Lord's supper, the communion, feet-washing, healing the sick, and proving his love for the poor and unfortunate, in every possible way.

THE NEED OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

It is patent to all that such a thing as church goverment, must be and is taught in the gospels. With the coming of Jesus, came the kingdom of God. Now a kingdom must have all the functions of order, and manifest all the elements of law. In some of our churches there is a sad lack of government, and I must say in all truth, that the cause of this very deplorable condition is, that in the election of officers, we have not always followed the gospel plan, and have as a consequence elected men to office that were not qualified for the work. First, some of them do not have the spiritual leading and humility, and then they do not have the knowledge of the gospel. As must be expected, in such cases the human idea predominates, and the work of the church degenerates to a matter of policy, and is made to suit human conveniences, and what is convenient for one is not generally convenient for the others; there are divisions and lack of union, and then follows all consequent calamities, possibly best illustrated by trying to draw a big load with a lot of balky horses, not two of which will pull together, because they have not the spirit of pull.

From what I have already said the conclusion may be drawn that the remedy of these conditions lies in the power and rightful authority of the ministry. If we read understandingly the gospel, we will see nearly, if not all of the results of church work are but the evidences of the kind of teaching that has been given. Jesus came teaching and preaching. You will observe that teaching comes first. From teaching, we get our knowledge and in some way or other, the spirit has much to do with preaching, and, while teaching is almost altogether applied to the unbeliever, and is to be the means of their enlightenment and conversion, preaching is for the believer, saint, as well as sinner. Or if preaching means to proclaim the gospel, teaching means to explain its nature and discipline. Inasmuch, then, as teaching is the means of producing the right qualifications for membership in the kingdom of God, it will be seen that we must ever go to the gospels themselves for the truth to be taught. I here mention a cardinal condition that must obtain in the church, before any kind of government can be expected. And that is, that we must have the loyal consent of the governed. For they who will not consent to be governed by the gospel, and led by the Holy Spirit, are not fit for the kingdom of God. Self must be absolutely denied, and as Paul says, crucified.

Where a lack of good government obtains in our churches, so far as I have been able to observe, it is directly traceable to a lack of the gospel qualifications in the officers, which indicates bad teaching as to these matters on the part of some one. Inasmuch, then, as teaching is the cardinal element in the making of a strong and well disciplined church, let us begin with the teachers. There are the offices of evanglist, bishop, elder and deacon, which I wish to notice.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR EVANGELIST.

Evangelist, from ev, good, and Angelum, messenger. This official designation appears first in the 21st chapter of the Acts, 8th verse, where Philip, one of the seven deacons is called an evangelist. He having been called because of peculiar qualifications. Acts 6. Immediately after the stoning of Stephen, Philip seems to have gone into Samaria, and there done a mighty work. Acts 8 : 5. It was there the angel of the Lord spoke to him, and sent him to Gaza, where he baptized the Ethiopian. In all of this he was wholly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8 : 26-40. It is certain that the chief qualification for an evangelist, is the "fulness" of the Holy Spirit, and in addition to this, there must be a knowledge of God's word. Paul says to Timothy, "Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." Now if Timothy was an evangelist, and I believe he was, let us notice his qualification. First, he from a child had known the Scriptures. II Tim. 3 : 15. He was a man of *unfeigned* faith. II Tim. 1 : 5. Had the hands of the presbytery laid on him. I Tim. 4 : 14 and 1 : 6. He *continued* in the things that he had learned, knowing of whom he had learned them. II Tim. 3 : 14. A student, knowing how to rightly divide the Scriptures. II Tim. 2 : 15.